



National Alliance for  
Public Charter Schools

# **A Growing Movement: America's Largest Charter School Communities**



**Fifth Annual Edition | November 2010**



**P**ublic charter schools have been part of America’s public education system for 18 years, and the number of these unique public schools is growing more each year. Thanks in part to programs like Race to the Top, states are encouraged and rewarded for embracing education reform and helping charter schools grow and replicate. But what does this growth mean?

Annually, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools tries to answer that question by examining the growing student enrollment in public charter schools. This report describes which communities have the highest percentage of public school students enrolled in charter schools. We know that in communities where families have an option, an increasing number of them are choosing public charter schools over the traditional public schools available to them. As a result, the public education landscape is gradually shifting in many major cities.

Today, a record number of school districts—four—have at least 30 percent of public school students enrolled in charter schools. Additionally, 16 school districts have more than 20 percent of their public school students enrolled in charter schools, 10 more than five years ago. Ninety-one school districts now have at least 10 percent of public school students in charter schools, 27 more districts than two years ago.

These numbers show charter enrollment growth remains strong. With approximately 420,000 more students across the country hoping for an additional seat in a charter school, we expect these market share numbers to continue to rise in the coming years.

For the fifth year in a row, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools has gathered public school enrollment data to find the highest local proportions of students enrolled in public charter schools. Table 1 shows the results for the 2009-2010 school year.

## The “Top 10” Districts Serving the Highest Percentage of Public Charter School Students

Rank	School District	State	Charter Market Share	Charter Enrollment	Non-Charter Enrollment	Total District Enrollment	Rank and Market Share in 2009
1	New Orleans Public School System	LA	61%	22,481	14,335	36,816	#1 and 57%
2	District of Columbia Public Schools	DC	38%	27,660	45,051	72,711	#2 and 36%
3	Detroit Public Schools	MI	36%	50,139	89,488	139,627	#3 and 32%
4	Kansas City, Missouri School District	MO	32%	8,834	18,839	27,673	#4 and 29%
5	Dayton Public Schools	OH	29%	6,204	15,075	21,279	#5 and 27%
	Flint Community Schools	MI	29%	5,270	12,774	18,044	#8 and 24%
6	Gary Community School Corporation	IN	28%	4,509	11,798	16,307	#9 and 23%
7	DeSoto Independent School District	TX	27%	3,434	9,069	12,503	Not in Top 10
	St. Louis Public Schools	MO	27%	9,584	26,311	35,895	#7 and 25%
8	Central Dauphin School District	PA	26%	3,767	10,900	14,667	Not in Top 10
9	Albany City School District	NY	24%	2,589	7,979	10,568	Not in Top 10
10	West Chester Area School District	PA	23%	3,585	11,800	15,385	Not in Top 10



We also include a top ten list of school districts by the number of public charter school students enrolled. The ten districts with the largest number of students in public charter schools represent 21.5 percent of the total public charter school population nationwide, a total of 353,454 students out of roughly 1.6 million.

## The “Top 10” Districts Serving the Highest Number of Public Charter School Students

Rank	School District	State	Charter Enrollment	Non-Charter Enrollment	Total District Enrollment	Charter Market Share	Rank and Charter Enrollment in 2009
1	Los Angeles Unified School District	CA	68,469	609,808	678,277	10%	#1 and 59,122
2	Detroit Public Schools	MI	50,139	89,488	139,627	36%	#2 and 43,035
3	Houston Independent School District	TX	34,567	187,206	221,773	16%	#4 and 29,889
4	The School District of Philadelphia	PA	33,916	165,694	199,610	17%	#3 and 32,579
5	Chicago Public Schools	IL	33,711	372,910	406,621	8%	#5 and 28,973
6	Miami-Dade County Public Schools	FL	30,859	314,934	345,793	9%	#7 and 23,865
7	New York City Department of Education	NY	30,049	969,266	999,315	3%	#8 and 21,367
8	District of Columbia Public Schools	DC	27,660	45,051	72,711	38%	#6 and 25,729
9	New Orleans Public School System	LA	22,481	14,335	36,816	61%	#9 and 20,068
10	Broward County Public Schools	FL	21,603	235,203	256,806	8%	#10 and 19,867

## A Closer Look

**New Orleans remains number one in market share percentage:** More than five years after Hurricane Katrina, public charter schools continue to play a primary role in rebuilding the city’s public education system. Not only are charters in New Orleans, La. serving a higher percentage of public school students (61 percent) than anywhere else in the nation, they are also the highest performing sector of public schools in the city. More importantly, the city’s public schools as a whole continue to outperform the pre-Katrina system.<sup>1</sup>

**Four school districts reach at least 30 percent market share:** Kansas City, Mo. (at 32 percent) joins New Orleans, La. (61 percent), Washington, D.C. (38 percent), and Detroit, Mich. (36 percent) with at least 30 percent of public school students enrolled in charter schools.

**Sixteen school districts have at least 20 percent:** When we first compiled this report in 2005, a market share of 20 percent would land a community in the fourth-highest position. This year, such a concentration does not break into the top ten at all. The number of communities with at least a 20 percent market share has steadily climbed from six in 2005-06 to eight in 2006-07, 12 in 2007-08, 14 in 2008-09 and 16 in 2009-10 – with several more districts likely to pass this threshold in the 2010-2011 school year.

**The floor for the “Top 10” market share list jumped to 23 percent:** For the first three years this report was assembled, the 10th-highest market share percentage was less than 20 percent. The 10th-highest market share was 13 percent in both 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 and 19 percent in 2007-2008. Because of the strong and steady growth in charter enrollment in several communities, the 10th-highest market share percentage this year is 23 percent. There are now 91 school districts with at least a 10 percent market share (see Appendix A), which is 27 more than just two years ago.

<sup>1</sup> The Scott Cowen Institute. (2010). The state of public education in New Orleans. New Orleans, LA: Author. [www.coweninstitute.com/2010-state-of-public-education-in-new-orleans-report](http://www.coweninstitute.com/2010-state-of-public-education-in-new-orleans-report)



**Los Angeles again tops the list in number of public charter school students:** More than 68,000 students attended public charter schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District during the 2009-10 school year, the highest number for any school district in the country. (See Appendix B for a list of the top 50 school districts by the number of public charter school students.)

**Enrollment leaps by 10 percent in list of “Top 10” districts by number of public charter school students:** While the school districts on the “Top 10” list by number of public charter school students stayed the same as in 2009, seven of the 10 school districts on the list experienced more than 10 percent growth in the number of students enrolled in charter schools between 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. The two school districts with the largest growth in enrollment in charter schools were New York City with a 41 percent increase, and Miami Dade with a 29 percent increase.

**Additional district and school-level data can be found on the Public Charter School Dashboard:** [www.publiccharters.org/dashboard](http://www.publiccharters.org/dashboard).

## Notes About Methodology

1. In this analysis, we examined market share in school districts with more than 10,000 public school students (both charter and non-charter) in the 2009-2010 school year.<sup>2</sup> We gathered charter and non-charter public school enrollment data from state department of education databases and personnel.
2. More than 50 percent of charter schools nationwide are their own independent Local Education Agencies (LEAs), rather than part of traditional public school district LEAs. In the past, this fact meant that it was not always clear in which school district charter schools were physically located, especially for charter schools located in large metropolitan cities with more than one school district (e.g., Phoenix and Houston). For the fifth edition of the “Top 10” charter communities by market share report, we used a geo-coding method to increase the accuracy of identifying the geographically relevant school districts for each charter. Specifically, we geo-coded every charter school that is an independent LEA to the geographically relevant traditional public school district LEA by mapping charter school addresses onto school district boundary maps available through the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>3</sup>
3. The growing number of virtual charter schools enrolling children from across an entire state presents another issue. Because many states haven’t developed student enrollment reporting systems that allow the sorting of individual students by community of residence at each charter school, we excluded virtual school enrollment data from both the charter and total district enrollment data when calculating market share percentages. We recognize that this decision might create some undercounting in school districts where large numbers of students are enrolled in virtual charter schools.
4. For Michigan and Ohio, we used student resident enrollment data that indicate the total number of students attending charter schools based on the district where students reside. The student residence enrollment data present more accurate information regarding how many students from a school district attend charter schools, and we will continue to attempt to obtain similar data for additional states.
5. Official 2009-10 enrollment data were not available for the state of California at the time of the release of this report. The California Charter School Association provided official enrollment data for the Los Angeles Unified School District. For all other districts in California, we used enrollment data from four previous school years to estimate the 2009-10 enrollment data. The estimation procedure followed the following steps:
  - a) We calculated the average change in enrollment for each school over four years and added the average change in enrollment to the school’s 2008-09 enrollment to estimate the 2009-10 enrollment.
  - b) If a school was new in 2008-09, we could not estimate the average change in enrollment from previous years. For these schools, we calculated the average change in enrollment for all charter schools in the state from the previous four years and added that number to the school’s 2008-09 enrollment to estimate 2009-10 enrollment.
  - c) For new schools in 2009-10, we estimated the average enrollment of new schools in the district from the previous four years. New schools in 2009-10 were given this new enrollment number as the 2009-10 estimate.
  - d) For new schools in 2009-10 in districts that did not previously have a new school, we estimated the average enrollment of new schools for the entire state for the previous four years and applied that number to the new school to estimate 2009-10 enrollment.
  - e) We used a similar process to calculate changes in enrollment for school districts and estimate 2009-10 enrollment for the districts.
6. The approximate number of 420,000 students on waiting lists to attend charter schools was estimated from a national survey, with a 30 percent response rate, of charter schools during the 2009-2010 school year.
7. After gathering the data, we determined the ten highest market share percentages: 61, 38, 36, 32, 29, 28, 27, 26, 24, and 23. As shown in the second methodology note, some of these percentages included multiple communities.

<sup>2</sup> The Youngstown City Schools district made the Top 10 Communities by Market Share in previous years. In the 2008-2009 school year, Youngstown was ranked sixth with a market share of 26 percent and 2,764 charter school students out of a total of 10,618 public school students. However, in the 2009-2010 school year, the district did not reach our threshold of 10,000 total enrollment; the school district enrolled a total of 9,615 public school students.

<sup>3</sup> One example of changes to the “Top 10” communities by Market Share list due to the increased accuracy of the geocoding process is the emergence of the DeSoto Independent School District in Texas ranked at #7. In previous years, the charter schools in DeSoto were linked to the Dallas Independent School District.

## Appendix A:

### School Districts with at Least 10 Percent Market Share, 2009-2010

Rank	School District	State	Charter Market Share	Charter Enrollment	Non-Charter Enrollment	Total District Enrollment
1	New Orleans Public School System	LA	61%	22,481	14,335	36,816
2	District Of Columbia Public Schools	DC	38%	27,660	45,051	72,711
3	Detroit Public Schools	MI	36%	50,139	89,488	139,627
4	Kansas City, Missouri School District	MO	32%	8,834	18,839	27,673
5	Dayton Public Schools	OH	29%	6,204	15,075	21,279
	Flint Community Schools	MI	29%	5,270	12,774	18,044
6	Gary Community School Corporation	IN	28%	4,509	11,798	16,307
7	DeSoto Independent School District	TX	27%	3,434	9,069	12,503
	St. Louis Public Schools	MO	27%	9,584	26,311	35,895
8	Central Dauphin School District	PA	26%	3,767	10,900	14,667
9	Albany City School District	NY	24%	2,589	7,979	10,568
10	West Chester Area School District	PA	23%	3,585	11,800	15,385
11	Minneapolis Public School District	MN	22%	9,962	34,441	44,403
	Toledo Public Schools	OH	22%	7,447	25,718	33,165
12	Cleveland City Schools	OH	21%	13,180	48,410	61,590
	Northglenn-Thornton School District 12	CO	21%	9,286	34,474	43,760
13	Brighton School District 27J	CO	19%	2,823	12,097	14,920
	Carrollton-Farmers Branch Independent School District	TX	19%	5,940	25,707	31,647
	Grand Rapids Public Schools	MI	19%	4,533	18,733	23,266
	Grossmont Union High*	CA	19%	4,839	20,629	25,468
	Indianapolis Public Schools	IN	19%	7,675	33,372	41,047
	Milwaukee Public Schools	WI	19%	16,242	70,922	87,164
	Phoenix Union High School District	AZ	19%	5,921	25,083	31,004
14	Columbus City Schools	OH	18%	11,642	52,847	64,489
	Coweta County School District	GA	18%	5,109	22,560	27,669
	San Antonio Independent School District	TX	18%	10,529	48,043	58,572
	Taylor School District	MI	18%	1,852	8,311	10,163
15	Buffalo City School District	NY	17%	6,781	32,607	39,388
	Camden City School District	NJ	17%	2,707	12,923	15,630
	Cincinnati Public Schools	OH	17%	6,653	33,485	40,138
	Falcon School District 49	CO	17%	2,458	11,940	14,398
	Oakland Unified*	CA	17%	8,075	38,526	46,601
	The School District of Philadelphia	PA	17%	33,916	165,694	199,610
	St. Paul Public Schools	MN	17%	8,019	38,096	46,115
	Trenton City School District	NJ	17%	2,186	10,980	13,166
16	Chula Vista Elementary*	CA	16%	4,461	22,923	27,384
	Gilbert Unified District	AZ	16%	7,412	38,922	46,334
	Houston Independent School District	TX	16%	34,567	187,206	221,773
	Oshkosh Area School District	WI	16%	1,606	8,607	10,213
	Roosevelt Elementary District	AZ	16%	2,086	11,177	13,263
	Tucson Unified District	AZ	16%	10,405	55,861	66,266
17	Appleton Area School District	WI	15%	2,230	12,851	15,081
	Pueblo City School District 60	CO	15%	2,777	16,131	18,908
	Vista Unified*	CA	15%	4,011	22,812	26,823
18	Dysart Unified District	AZ	14%	3,919	24,466	28,385
	Flagstaff Unified District	AZ	14%	1,810	10,789	12,599
	Napa Valley Unified*	CA	14%	2,428	15,435	17,863
	Richland 1	SC	14%	3,877	24,087	27,964

Appendix A, Continued on p.5

## Appendix A (continued): School Districts with at Least 10 Percent Market Share, 2009-2010

Rank	School District	State	Charter Market Share	Charter Enrollment	Non-Charter Enrollment	Total District Enrollment
19	Academy School District 20	CO	13%	2,960	19,660	22,620
	East Central Independent School District	TX	13%	1,387	9,292	10,679
	Glendale Union High School District	AZ	13%	2,159	14,940	17,099
	Greeley School District 6	CO	13%	2,568	16,549	19,117
	Litchfield Elementary District	AZ	13%	1,489	10,117	11,606
	Mesa Unified District	AZ	13%	9,877	67,749	77,626
	Saginaw City School District	MI	13%	1,372	9,285	10,657
20	Akron Public Schools	OH	12%	3,196	23,644	26,840
	Brandywine School District	DE	12%	1,452	10,254	11,706
	Colonial School District	DE	12%	1,430	10,125	11,555
	Duluth Public School District	MN	12%	1,280	9,506	10,786
	Harrison School District 2	CO	12%	1,329	9,980	11,309
	Jordan School District	UT	12%	6,452	48,411	54,863
	Lake County Schools	FL	12%	4,991	36,108	41,099
	The School District of Lee County	FL	12%	9,985	70,485	80,470
	Meridian Joint School District 2	ID	12%	4,712	34,125	38,837
	Nampa School District 131	ID	12%	1,934	14,730	16,664
	Newark City School District	NJ	12%	5,391	39,441	44,832
	Oklahoma City Public Schools	OK	12%	5,096	37,826	42,922
21	Amphitheater Unified District	AZ	11%	1,911	15,123	17,034
	Colorado Springs School District 11	CO	11%	3,596	27,750	31,346
	Douglas County School District	CO	11%	6,696	53,236	59,932
	Inglewood Unified*	CA	11%	1,634	13,128	14,762
	Jersey City School District	NJ	11%	3,232	27,464	30,696
	Lansing Public School District	MI	11%	1,778	13,801	15,579
	Nebo School District	UT	11%	3,338	28,282	31,620
	Ogden School District	UT	11%	1,535	12,578	14,113
	Polk County Public Schools	FL	11%	10,583	83,994	94,577
	Sheboygan Area School District	WI	11%	1,111	9,149	10,260
	Traverse City Area Public Schools	MI	11%	1,185	9,980	11,165
	Twin Rivers Unified*	CA	11%	3,458	27,398	30,856
22	Baltimore City Public School System	MD	10%	8,472	74,394	82,866
	Christina School District	DE	10%	1,915	16,980	18,895
	Dallas Independent School District	TX	10%	16,931	156,479	173,410
	Dearborn City School District	MI	10%	2,042	18,532	20,574
	Deer Valley Unified District	AZ	10%	4,105	36,498	40,603
	Denver Public Schools	CO	10%	7,412	69,843	77,255
	Los Angeles Unified	CA	10%	68,469	609,808	678,277
	The School District of Osceola County	FL	10%	5,052	47,087	52,139
	Port Huron Area School District	MI	10%	1,214	10,373	11,587
	Red Clay Consolidated School District	DE	10%	1,706	15,674	17,380
	Sanger Unified*	CA	10%	1,087	9,684	10,771
	Sunnyside Unified District	AZ	10%	1,923	17,643	19,566

\* The official 2009-10 enrollment data for the state of California were not available at the time of this publication. With the exception of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), we estimated 2009-10 enrollment data for school districts in California. See the methodology section for an explanation of the estimation procedure.

## Appendix B:

### Top 50 School Districts by Number of Charter School Students, 2009-2010

Rank	School District	State	Charter Enrollment	Non-Charter Enrollment	Total District Enrollment	Charter Market Share
1	Los Angeles Unified	CA	68,469	609,808	678,277	10%
2	Detroit Public Schools	MI	50,139	89,488	139,627	36%
3	Houston Independent School District	TX	34,567	187,206	221,773	16%
4	The School District of Philadelphia	PA	33,916	165,694	199,610	17%
5	Chicago Public Schools	IL	33,711	372,910	406,621	8%
6	Miami-Dade County Public Schools	FL	30,859	314,934	345,793	9%
7	New York City Department Of Education	NY	30,049	969,266	999,315	3%
8	District Of Columbia Public Schools	DC	27,660	45,051	72,711	38%
9	New Orleans Public School System	LA	22,481	14,335	36,816	61%
10	Broward County Public Schools	FL	21,603	235,203	256,806	8%
11	Dallas Independent School District	TX	16,931	156,479	173,410	10%
12	Milwaukee Public Schools	WI	16,242	70,922	87,164	19%
13	Cleveland City Schools	OH	13,180	48,410	61,590	21%
14	San Diego Unified*	CA	11,702	120,870	132,572	9%
15	Columbus City Schools	OH	11,642	52,847	64,489	18%
16	Polk County Public Schools	FL	10,583	83,994	94,577	11%
17	San Antonio Independent School District	TX	10,529	48,043	58,572	18%
18	Tucson Unified District	AZ	10,405	55,861	66,266	16%
19	The School District of Lee County	FL	9,985	70,485	80,470	12%
20	Minneapolis Public School District	MN	9,962	34,441	44,403	22%
21	Mesa Unified District	AZ	9,877	67,749	77,626	13%
22	St. Louis Public Schools	MO	9,584	26,311	35,895	27%
23	Northglenn-Thornton School District 12	CO	9,286	34,474	43,760	21%
24	Albuquerque Public Schools	NM	9,017	87,184	96,201	9%
25	Kansas City, Missouri School District	MO	8,834	18,839	27,673	32%
26	Fulton County School District	GA	8,482	81,917	90,399	9%
27	Baltimore City Public School System	MD	8,472	74,394	82,866	10%
28	Oakland Unified*	CA	8,075	38,526	46,601	17%
29	St. Paul Public Schools	MN	8,019	38,096	46,115	17%
30	Clark County School District	NV	7,889	309,476	317,365	2%
31	The School District of Palm Beach County	FL	7,833	165,184	173,017	5%
32	Hawaii Department Of Education	HI	7,819	170,830	178,649	4%
33	Indianapolis Public Schools	IN	7,675	33,372	41,047	19%
34	Toledo Public Schools	OH	7,447	25,718	33,165	22%
35	Gilbert Unified District	AZ	7,412	38,922	46,334	16%
36	Denver Public Schools	CO	7,412	69,843	77,255	10%
37	Buffalo City School District	NY	6,781	32,607	39,388	17%
38	Douglas County School District	CO	6,696	53,236	59,932	11%
39	Cincinnati Public Schools	OH	6,653	33,485	40,138	17%
40	Jordan School District	UT	6,452	48,411	54,863	12%
41	Dayton Public Schools	OH	6,204	15,075	21,279	29%
42	Wake County Schools	NC	6,090	139,599	145,689	4%
43	Carrollton-Farmers Branch Independent School District	TX	5,940	25,707	31,647	19%
44	Phoenix Union High School District	AZ	5,921	25,083	31,004	19%
45	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	NC	5,717	133,584	139,301	4%
46	Cobb County School District	GA	5,503	101,742	107,245	5%
47	Alpine School District	UT	5,495	64,351	69,846	8%
48	Newark City School District	NJ	5,391	39,441	44,832	12%
49	DeKalb County School District	GA	5,356	94,050	99,406	5%
50	School District of Hillsborough County	FL	5,331	187,913	193,244	3%

\* The official 2009-10 enrollment data for the state of California were not available at the time of this publication. With the exception of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), we estimated 2009-10 enrollment data for school districts in California. See the methodology section for an explanation of the estimation procedure.



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